

Appendix E

Current Zoning Regulations

APPENDIX E

LAND USE: CURRENT ZONING REGULATIONS

The study area is subject to three different zoning designations: Downtown Office Core 1 (DOC1), Downtown Office Core 2 (DOC2) and the Downtown Mixed Commercial (DMC) zone. These zones are all intended to accommodate a wide range of uses, and are differentiated primarily by the density of the buildings permitted. Height limits and floor area ratios¹ (FAR) are the defining factor in how these areas are regulated, rather than the mix of uses permitted or prohibited. Additional information discussion of zones, height limits and density limits is provided in the Urban Design section.

DOC1. The Downtown Office Core 1 zone is intended to function as a high-density office and commercial area with related support services and retail shopping. This area is intended to be the densest of all areas Downtown, with the tallest height limits, in order to capitalize on existing transportation and utilities infrastructure. The DOC1 zone has an existing height limit of 450 feet, and a maximum commercial FAR limit of 14 FAR.

DOC2. The Downtown Office Core 2 zone is intended to accommodate significant office densities, and provide a transition between the Office Core 1 zone and less dense areas to the north and south of the Downtown core. Office uses are a primary emphasis, along with other commercial uses, retail shopping and services to support the DOC1 area. The DOC2 zones in the study area have existing height limits of 300 and 240 feet, and a maximum commercial FAR limit of 10 FAR.

DMC. The Downtown Mixed Commercial zone is intended for “lower-scale” office, retail and commercial uses supportive of the Office Core, along with housing and services for that housing. Buildings are expected to be lower in order to provide a transition between the office core and the surrounding lower-density neighborhoods. The DMC zones in the study area have existing height limits of 125, 160 and 240 feet, and a maximum commercial FAR limit of 7 FAR.

Uses

All three zones in the study area permit the same broad range of uses. All uses are permitted unless they are prohibited outright. The uses prohibited in these areas are:

- Drive-in businesses, except for gas stations located within parking garages;
- Outdoor storage;
- General and heavy manufacturing uses;
- Salvage and recycling uses except recycling collection stations;
- High-impact uses, such as slaughterhouses or manufacture of explosives; and
- adult motion picture theaters are prohibited in the DMC zone.


Some uses are permitted only if they comply with criteria laid out by the City to make sure they do not have significant impacts. These uses include:

- Long-term parking garages not associated with another use;
- Uses in public facilities that are not similar to other types of uses;
- Helistops and heliports;

¹ A floor area ratio (FAR) is a representation of the density of a building (or buildings) on a site. In Downtown Seattle is used to regulate the size of office and hotel development. It is equal to the usable amount of floor space in a building divided by the site area. A building with a FAR of ten on a 5,000 square foot site has 50,000 square feet of office or hotel space within the building. FAR does not indicate how tall that building is, so it could have one 50,000 SF floor, two 25,000 SF floors, or five 10,000 SF floors.

CURRENT ZONING WITHIN THE STUDY AREA

FIGURE E-1

- Zoning Boundary
 Outside Study Area

Strategic Planning Office
City of Seattle
May 20, 2002

No warranties of any sort, including accuracy, fitness, or merchantability, accompany this product.



Copyright, 2002, The City of Seattle.
All rights reserved.

dwntwnslzoning.apr

Work release centers; and
Jails.

Surface parking lots are prohibited in the DOC1 zone. In the DOC2 and DMC zones, surface lots are prohibited in some areas and permitted in other mapped locations.

Height and Density Limits

Table E-1 shows the current FAR and height limits for the subject zones, each with base and maximum FAR limits. Developers interested in building above the base FAR limit must mitigate some of the impacts of that additional floor area through use of the City of Seattle's Bonus or Transfer of Development Rights programs. Additional height is permitted in the Office Core zones for projects that provide additional setbacks to reduce the feeling of bulk. Additional height is also permitted in the Denny Triangle through the Transfer of Development Credits program.

Table E-1
Zoning, Current FAR Limits and Height Limits

	Base FAR Limit	Maximum FAR Limit	Height Limit
Downtown Office Core 1	6	14	450 ft. ²
Downtown Office Core 2	5	10	300 ft. ³ 240 ft. ²
Downtown Mixed Commercial	5	7	240 ft. ⁴ 160 ft. ³ 125 ft. ³

The Floor Area Ratio limits apply to all uses in DOC1 and DOC2, except:

Residential uses;	Area below grade;
Child care facilities;	Short-term parking; and
Museums;	Parking accessory to residential uses, up to
Performing arts theaters;	one parking space for each dwelling unit.
Street level uses, such as retail;	

The following uses, which may make a project eligible for additional floor area above the base limit, are also exempt from the floor area limits:

- Human service use;
- Public restrooms;
- Public open space amenities, including hillside terrace, urban plaza, parcel park, public atrium, green street improvement, green street setback;
- Hillclimb assists, shopping corridor, or transit tunnel station access where a map indicates that they can be provided; and
- Restoration and preservation of landmark performing arts theaters.

Developers in the DMC zone have two regulatory options for developing their property. The first option would permit the exemption of the same set of uses from floor area limits as DOC1 and DOC2 zones.

² height increase up to 20% above mapped limit allowed under specified conditions

³ height increase up to 10% above mapped height allowed under specified conditions; additional 10% increase (total 20% increase) allowed in mapped area; height increase up to 30% above mapped height allowed in Denny Triangle through TDC

⁴ height increase up to 30% above mapped height allowed in Denny Triangle through TDC

The second option exempts the following uses from floor area limits:

- Residential uses, except on lots from which development rights have been or are transferred;
- Area below grade;
- Accessory parking;
- Area of public benefit features that would be eligible for a bonus on the lot where the feature is located, regardless of size or use of the floor area bonus program.

Transfer of Development Rights and Downtown Bonus Programs

In order to be permitted to build above the base FAR limit, a developer must mitigate some of the impacts of uses occupying the floor area above that base FAR limit. There are two methods used to mitigate specific impacts, the Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) program and through a Floor Area Bonus program.

Under a TDR program, a developer is allowed to transfer the right to unused base floor area from a “sending” site to a “receiving” site. A sending site must have a City of Seattle landmark structure, public open space or low-income housing and not use all permitted base FAR. For example, a 2 FAR landmark structure in the DOC1 zone would be able to transfer up to 4 FAR to one or more “receiving sites” (a new structure with more than the base FAR).

The Floor Area Bonus program allows for the mitigation of the impact of additional Downtown workers on demand for low-income housing, childcare, human services, open space and transportation. Developers who provide funding or facilities to mitigate some or all of these impacts are permitted additional non-exempt floor area.

Transfer of Development Credits Program

In 1999, the City amended Downtown zoning to allow a 30% height increase in the DOC 2 and DMC zones within the Denny Triangle neighborhood boundaries. Additional residential floor area gained through the purchase of development credits from rural lands in King County and contributions to a City fund for public amenities in the Denny Triangle neighborhood. The height increase allows residential and mixed-use projects to accommodate the additional residential area. The TDC program differs from the City’s TDR program in that it only allows for additional residential density. Since residential development Downtown is not subject to a density limit, the only option for increasing the residential floor area in a project is to allow more height. The TDC program cannot be used by commercial projects to increase non-residential floor area above existing base and maximum FAR limits. Therefore, it does not compete with the TDR programs in place to accommodate commercial density increases.

Additional Height

A 10% height increase above the mapped height limits in DOC 1 and DOC 2 zones is allowed for projects that decrease the floor size of upper floors by a specified percentage. In DOC 1, the 450-foot height limit is increased to 495 feet (approximately 3 to 4 additional floors), DOC 2 300’ is increased to 330 feet (2 to 3 additional floors), and DOC 2 240’ is increased to 264 feet (2 additional floors). The added height does not allow additional building density. Maximum FAR limits continue to control commercial density. The additional height limit also contains a separate limit on gross floor area which applies to lots using the extra height, to restrict additional bulk from most floor area that is exempt from FAR limits, such as market-rate housing. With three exceptions, none of the floor area above grade, including floor area in residential use could exceed the maximum FAR on the lot that contains the structure exceeding the height limit. The exceptions are street level uses, bonused housing, and floor area above the height limit gained through the TDC program (the last applies in the Denny Triangle only).